



MARK POWER : *Beauty & the Beast*

There are many people responsible for helping me make these photographs. I am grateful to them all.

In particular, I would like to thank Alex Castro, Maria-Angelica Fernandez, Frances Fralin, Azar Hammond, Debbie Lewis, and Jane Livingston for their help.

Finally, I am especially grateful to Virginia North—without the continued gift of her presence and time, it would have been impossible for me to work on this project.

Mark Power

MARK POWER : *Beauty & the Beast*

OCTOBER 4—DECEMBER 9, 1979

THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D.C.



To now allow ourselves the luxury of a little common sense in dealing with photography as an art form, we might admit that things are perhaps simpler than they seem. The various polemically introduced "factions" or contradictory intellectual positions vis à vis the aesthetics of photography, may be much more easily ignored than one would have liked to foresee. For one, we may now be ready to give up the artificial but tenacious distinction between a "romantic" school of photography, and a "realist" or formalist one. Without belaboring the history of this idea, I want to propose that a key contribution in its potential overcoming is in the work of Mark Power, himself generally identified as a "romanticist" in the medium. Besides writing science fiction, other novelistic work, and criticism, Power has experimented in a number of photographic techniques and approaches. He has worked with double and sequential images; with specifically narrative sequences, images actually accompanied by text captions; extensively with portraiture. He has used various cameras and printing techniques, including 35 mm, the Diana camera, Polacolor, SX-70, palladium, 8 x 10 view camera, and, most recently, the 4 x 5 view camera. Now he is color tinting his photographs. What has united the work is a constant underlying concern with autobiography, and an unselfconscious fascination with mythic imagery.

Power has from the first wanted to understand his own aes-

thetic predilections; he has examined himself in an extended roving soliloquy. He has externalized this project of excavation in a series of careful reflections, communicated in his teaching and published variously as fiction, criticism, and interview. More important, Power has continued to make and show photographs, developing steadily as an artist of passion, tenacious self-exploration, and steadily awakening sensual honesty. He has been at times a little hesitant, his work at moments becoming slightly arch or histrionic—but he has never been a boring artist nor a truly pretentious one. It is rare that an artist who has taken his own fantasy-life, or self, as his subject, without seeming to impart generally available messages, can remain so basically straightforward and legible as does Power in much of his work, especially this recent work.

Power's photographs are full of secrecy. They exude a particular quality of delicacy, of a kind of languorous, questioning presence. Power can produce entirely irresistible work with a genuine quotient of depth and enduringness. And he seems increasingly to sustain the level of quality throughout a body of work. The magnetism of Power's best work resides in an unusual synthesis he has forged between, on the one hand, an unabashed "romanticism," indeed an almost Edwardian sweetness of style and imagery—and, on the other, an uncompromising avoidance of trickery or cheap

seduction. The photographs in the present exhibition, representing a year's rigorously edited production, may seem at moments nostalgic, but they are not cloying.

In Power's recent hand-tinted color photographs, he has abandoned the various earlier devices such as narrative seriality or captioning, concentrating on the images themselves, and, just as important, on the particular quality of their chromatic tonality. It is surely not coincidence that Power has chosen to bypass the "straight" photographer's use of the camera's indigenous processed color-film palette, opting for the more painterly solution to color handling in photography. His recent photographs are printed on black and white paper and colored with dyes, washed on after initial developing. Indeed Power increasingly appears to be an artist whose impulse derives from other than "straight photographic" sources—from literary fantasy, from surrealism generally, and, most startling, from the aesthetic belonging to printmaking such as etching or lithography. It is not as though Power is unaware of other photographers; in fact he is intimately familiar with the medium's history and is consciously aware of his affinities with Julia Margaret Cameron, Lewis Carroll, Lewis Hine, Josef Sudek. Unlike these photographers, and oddly like some contemporary photographers he perhaps admires less, Power has lately been incorporating other photographs into his work. For even while this new work seems to be simpler and more "pure" photography than some of the earlier work incorporating juxtapositions and captioning, it is in fact more covered with artifice, more *mediated*, than before. There is a layering of images and a layering of thought. A peculiar thing occurs with some of these photographs of photographs. They are made by color-tinting the image, with perhaps an illusionistically "superposed" feature, for example the fly in *Untitled 21* coated with rubber cement which is subsequently removed. The color-tinted paper with masked grey or color-

less features is then often selenium-toned. What results from the combination of color and grey or sepia areas heightens these photographs' character of slight tension: in these works which use other photographs for subject, with the addition of a sort of *trompe l'oeil*, after-the-fact, overlay, the original, "found," photograph seems at the same time to be violated, even brutalized, and lovingly embellished.

Power says that he feels he has moved away from the intimately personal and autobiographical nature of his earlier work since he is no longer concentrating on portraits of people close to him or dealing with private allegories or jokes. Now his subject is certainly more "objective" than before, but this recent work still has a rather ruminative character; we sense we are being let in on the artist's fantasy, and in such photographs as *Untitled 18* or *Untitled 19*, the fantasy engages us erotically. "The eroticism in my work is its least conscious element," Power insists—but the viewer responds to the works' literal and metaphoric *layerings*, and to the sensuousness that occurs through the juxtaposition of flesh and gratuitous decoration, with a distinctly erotic, or at least emotional, sensation.

It is remarkable that the new device, that of combining more than one photograph to make unexpected and often libidinous associations, creates paradoxically *non-collage* or montage-like images. The works do not feel like "manipulated" photographs. Perhaps the unity and sense of an organic gestalt which Power achieves in these photographs is due in part to the use of subtle, painterly color. Certainly Power continues to draw upon his own predilection for romantic fantasy, but now he seems able as rarely before both to universalize his reveries and to transcend the photographic medium while being true to its particular aesthetic.

Jane Livingston

MARK POWER

Born Washington, D.C., 1937.

Attended Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine, 1956-57; Art Center College of Design, Los Angeles, California, 1960-61; American University, Washington, D.C., 1961.

Worked as free-lance photographer in Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963-67; New York City, 1967-68; and Washington, D.C., 1968-69.

Owned Icon Gallery (of photography), Washington, D.C., 1968-70.

Co-curated "First Invitational" and "Second Invitational" photography exhibitions, Corcoran Gallery-Dupont Center, Washington, D.C., 1970, 1971.

Curated "Young Washington Photographers," Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1974; "Marcel Bardon," Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1975.

Received Corcoran Workshop Program Grant (originally Washington Gallery of Modern Art Artist Fellowship Program), 1971, 1972, 1973; Received Materials Grant from the Polaroid Corporation, 1972-75.

Instructor of Art, Corcoran School of Art, Washington, D.C., 1971-74; Assistant Professor of Art, Corcoran School of Art, 1975-present.

Lives Leesburg, Virginia.

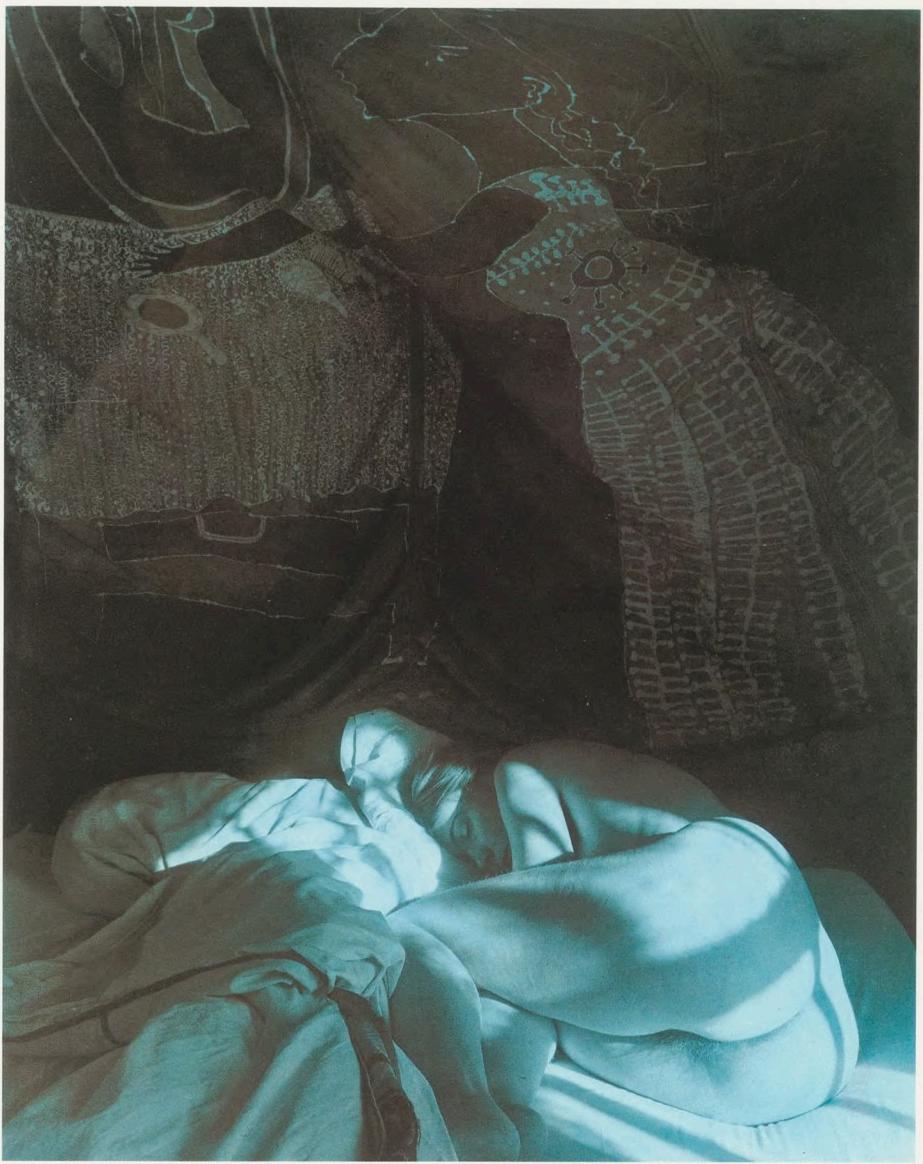
CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION

Untitled 1 through *Untitled 30*, inclusive. All photographs are color toned black and white silver prints on 11 x 14 inch paper; image dimensions vary slightly.

Untitled 17 through *Untitled 21* are reproduced consecutively in the catalogue.

Cover: *Untitled*, no. 16





INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

- 1967 Hopkins Art Center, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.
- 1970 Corcoran Gallery-Dupont Center, Washington, D.C.
- 1974 Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., "Mark Power Photographs/Juxtapositions 1971 and Recent Work." Brochure.
- Jefferson Place Gallery, Washington, D.C.
- 1976 Columbia Gallery, Columbia, Missouri.
- 1977 Diane Brown Gallery, Washington, D.C.
- 1978 Kathleen Ewing—Quindacqua, Ltd., Washington, D.C.
- 1979 Noyes Gallery, Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1969 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia, "Virginia Photographers." Catalogue.
- 1970 Corcoran Gallery-Dupont Center, Washington, D.C., "First Invitational."
- Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Maryland, "Eleven Washington Photographers." Poster.
- 1972 University of Maryland Art Gallery, College Park, Maryland, "Photography Here and Now, 15 Artists from the Washington-Baltimore Area." Catalogue.
- Pasadena Museum of Art, Pasadena, California, "Permanent Collection."
- 1973 Polaroid Gallery, Cambridge, Massachusetts, "From the Collection."
- Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia, "Virginia Photographers, 1973." Catalogue.

- Neikrug Gallery, New York City, "Critics Choice."
- Jefferson Place Gallery, Washington, D.C., "Six Photographers."
- 1974 Columbia College Gallery, Chicago, Illinois.
- Eric Shindler Gallery, Richmond, Virginia, "Thirteen Virginia Photographers."
- International Center of Photography, New York City, "In Just Seconds," organized by the Polaroid Corporation, traveled throughout the United States, 1974-75. Brochure.
- 1975 The University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City, Iowa, "Color and Image: Six Artists from Washington, D.C." Catalogue.
- Washington Project for the Arts, Washington, D.C., "Inaugural Exhibition."
- 1976 The Foundry, Washington, D.C., "The Inland Steel Foundry Art Project."
- 1978 The Museum of Temporary Art, Washington, D.C., "36 Hours."

PUBLISHED PORTFOLIOS

- "Image of America," *Camera*, no. 6, June 1967, pp. 22-29.
- "Two Sisters," *Camera*, no. 9, September 1969, pp. 6-43.
- "The Nude as Portrait," *Creative Camera*, May 1970.
- Glooskap's Children*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1972. (Text by Peter Anastos.)
- When Gloucester Was Gloucester*, Gloucester Centennial Press, Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1973. (Text by Peter Anastos.)
- "Instant Photography," *Camera*, vol. 53, no. 10, October 1974, p. 21.
- "Mark Power," *Camera*, no. 1, January 1978, pp. 4, 13.

ARTICLES, REVIEWS, AND STATEMENTS BY THE ARTIST

"New Photo Show: The Corcoran Photography Workshop's Second Invitational," *Woodwind*, vol. 2, no. 15, May 1971, p. 18.

"The Art in Photography," *The Washington Post*, October 31, 1971, p. K10.

"At the Movies: 'Memories of Underdevelopment,'" *Woodwind*, vol. 3, no. 4, November 1971, p. 12.

"At the Movies: 'The French Connection,'" *Woodwind*, vol. 3, no. 5, December 1971, p. 12.

"At the Movies: 'The Last Picture Show,'" *Woodwind*, vol. 3, no. 6, January 1972, pp. 12-13.

"At the Movies: 'Grove Press: Cinema of Subversion/Search for the Quintessential Fonda,'" *Woodwind*, vol. 3, no. 7, January 1972, pp. 12-13.

"At the Movies: 'A Clockwork Orange,'" *Woodwind*, vol. 3, no. 10, March 7, 1972, pp. 10-11.

"At the Movies: 'The Godfather,'" *Woodwind*, vol. 3, no. 14, May 1972, p. 8.

"At the Movies: 'The Decameron/Freaks/Night of the Living Dead/The Sorrow and the Pity,'" *Woodwind*, vol. 3, no. 15, May 1972, p. 9.

"Times Together," introduction to *George Krause—1*, Toll & Armstrong, Publishers, Haverford, Pennsylvania, 1972.

"Juxtapositions" and "Recent Work," statements in *Mark Power Photographs/Juxtapositions 1971 and Recent Work* exhibition brochure, Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1974.

Introduction to *Shirley True* exhibition catalogue, May 1974.

"Allen Appel," *Washington Review of the Arts*, Summer 1974, p. 10.

"The Definitive Picture of Edward Weston," *The Washington Post*, August 2, 1974, p. B2.

"With Light as the Central Motif," *The Washington Post*, December 27, 1974, p. B14.

"On Exhibition: The Development of Photography in America," *The Washington Post*, February 8, 1975, p. D5.

"Sequential Photography: Unfolding a Visual Kaleidoscope," *The Washington Post*, March 15, 1975, p. B9.

"Photography: On Its Own," *The Washington Post*, March 18, 1975, p. B1, 9.

"Theology and a Photo Religion," *The Washington Post*, April 19, 1975, p. D7.

"An Exhibit of 'Pure' Victorian Photography," *The Washington Post*, May 6, 1975, p. B7.

"Moving to the Beat of the '50s," *The Washington Post*, May 28, 1975, p. B9.

"The Many Faces of a Woman," *The Washington Post*, July 22, 1975, p. B5.

"Double Exposure," *The Washington Post*, September 27, 1975, p. C5.

"A Brand New Gallery With Eye Appeal," *The Washington Post*, November 21, 1975, p. C11.

"Washington, D.C. Galleries blossom in newly active scene," *Afterimage*, vol. 4, no. 5, November 1976, pp. 7-8.

"Washington Photographers and the Contact Print," *Washington Review of the Arts*, vol. 2, no. 4, Winter 1976-77, pp. 3-7.

"Washington, D.C.: Capitol Photographs at the Corcoran," *Afterimage*, vol. 4, no. 8, February 1977, pp. 19-20.

"The Nation's Capital in Photographs," *Washington Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, Spring 1977, p. 18.

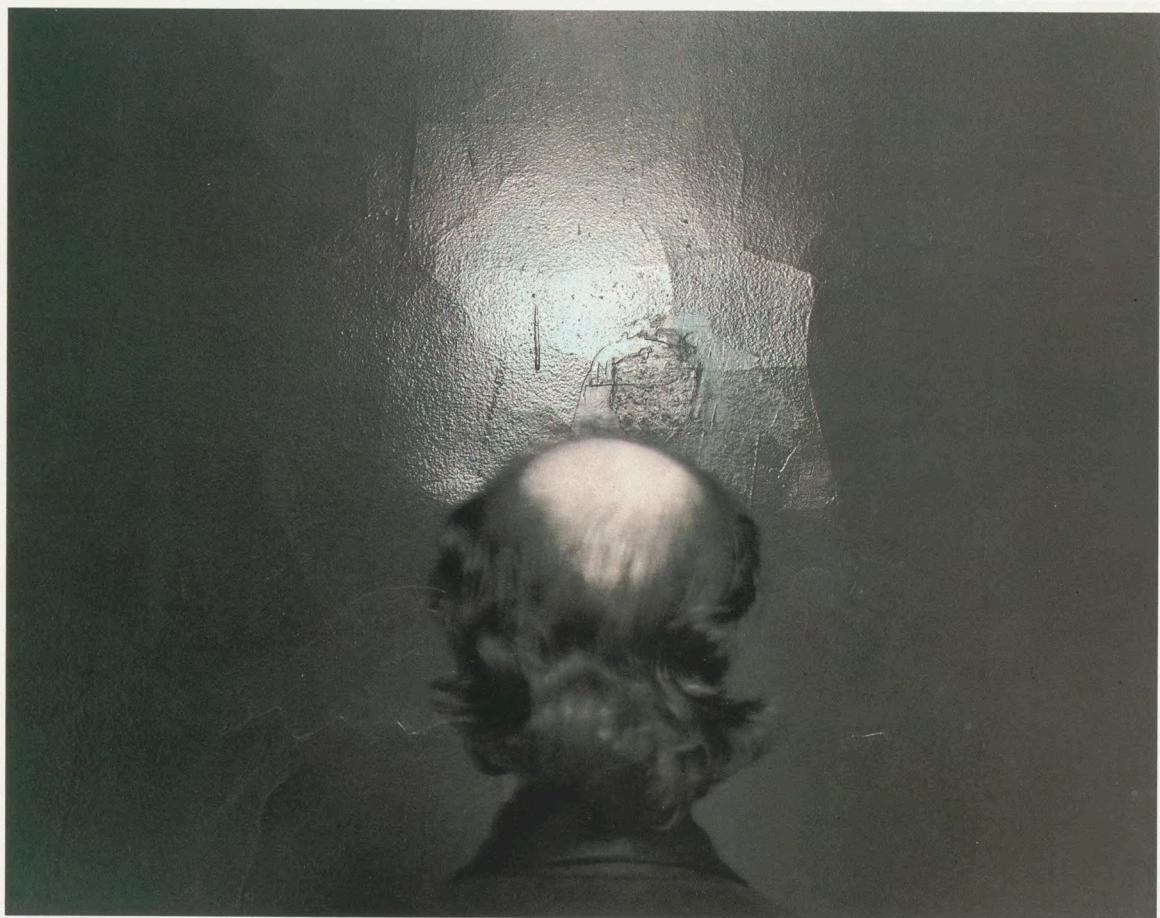
"Washington, D.C.: Man Ray, a multi-faceted master," *Afterimage*, vol. 5, nos. 1 & 2, May-June 1977, p. 19.

"Iowa in Ohio," introduction to *IOWA*, by Nancy Rexroth, Violet Press, Yellow Springs, Ohio, 1977.

"The Presence of Things," introduction to unpublished book of photographs by Frank DiPerna, 1978.

"An Inquiry into Modern Romantic Photography," *Washington Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, June-July 1979, pp. 19-20.

"Marcel Bardon," exhibition catalogue introduction, Gilbert Gallery, Chicago, Illinois, October 1979.





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- Cohen, Joyce Tenneson. "The Personal Photo Journal," *Washington Review of the Arts*, vol. 1, no. 3, October 1975, pp. 16-19, illus. cover, pp. 17, 19.
- Fleming, Lee. "Mark Power, Jones Road Print Shop and Stable (Diane Brown Gallery, until May 28)," *Washington Calendar Magazine*, no. 8, May 1977, p. 32.
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- Richard, Paul. "Blossoming...Bulging Art," *The Washington Post*, May 14, 1977, p. B7.
- Richard, Paul. "Galleries," *The Washington Post*, April 21, 1976, p. D2.
- Slipek, Edwin J., Jr. "At the Schindler/Photography as Art," *The Richmond Mercury*, February 26, 1975, pp. 10-11, ill.
- Tannous, David. "Cold Naked Honesty/Six Young Talented Photographers," *Washington Scene*, vol. 10, May 1974, pp. 10-13, 19, ill.
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